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Committee on the Rights of the Child
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Summary record of the 2136th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 14 September 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Mezmur

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined third to fifth periodic reports of Sierra Leone (CRC/C/SLE/3-5; CRC/C/SLE/Q/3-5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Sierra Leone took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Blyden** (Sierra Leone), introducing her country's combined third to fifth periodic reports (CRC/C/SLE/3-5), said that Sierra Leone was fully committed to the implementation of the Convention and other international instruments in the sphere of the rights of the child. The recent Ebola outbreak had presented a major human rights challenge for Sierra Leone. It had affected thousands of children, leaving many orphaned. Her delegation would have preferred to come before the Committee at a later date, since, although the outbreak had now been contained, it had seriously hindered the Government's efforts to implement the Convention. Furthermore, the Government was still focused on its recovery strategy.

3. The President attached great importance to the protection of the rights of the child and had appointed prominent human rights defenders to senior government positions in that field. The protection of the rights of the child remained a priority, one that required the continued assistance and engagement of the international community. Indeed, the need for international aid had increased in the wake of the Ebola outbreak.

4. Children mattered in Sierra Leone where they were allowed to have a say in national decisions affecting them. For that reason there was a child member on the delegation who would help to prepare responses to the questions raised by the Committee during the dialogue. Regrettably, owing to circumstances beyond her delegation's control, it had not been possible to submit the replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/SLE/Q/3-5/Add.1) on time. Moreover, it had not been possible to fully implement the obligations, policies and plans envisaged for the reporting period.

5. However, progress had been made. Since assuming office in 2007, the President had launched two inclusive, rights-based programmes, the Agenda for Change and the Agenda for Prosperity, both of which were informed by the political, economic, social and cultural rights enshrined in the Convention and other international instruments in the sphere of the rights of the child. Those two programmes and the post-Ebola recovery strategy, which had been launched in July 2015, had institutionalized the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. They set out a time frame in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. The Government recognized that the Child Rights Act, 2007 and the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, 2009 should be amended and that a review of the discriminatory provisions in the current Constitution should be conducted. Mechanisms had been established to ensure that the domestic legal framework was brought into line with the Convention. The Government had also taken measures in connection with female genital mutilation.

7. Efforts had been made to counter gender-based violence, including violence against children, and to prosecute perpetrators. Progress had been made towards achieving gender parity in the education sector, and the enrolment rate had increased. The Child Labour National Technical Steering Committee had been established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and was developing a national action plan to combat the worst forms of child labour. Free health care was provided for survivors of the Ebola virus disease, victims of sexual violence, children under the age of 5 years and women who were pregnant or

breastfeeding. Improved data management systems and training had also been implemented in the health-care sector. The ongoing civil registration and vital statistics programme included measures to improve the rate of birth registration. The Government had prioritized the improvement of the water supply to villages and towns and was working on the development of strategies to upgrade the capital city's water supply system.

8. **Ms. Winter** (Country Rapporteur) said that, contrary to the impression given by the media, the purpose of the meeting was not to allow the Committee to sit in judgment, but to provide assistance to the State party. The Committee acknowledged that the Ebola outbreak had prevented the full implementation of its concluding observations on the State party's second periodic report (CRC/C/SLE/CO/2).

9. The greatest challenge that Sierra Leone faced was the sustainable implementation of its legislation in order to ultimately reduce its dependence on foreign aid. Furthermore, the poverty rate was very high, and there were large disparities between urban and rural areas.

10. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** (Country Rapporteur) said that, although the late submission of the replies to the list of issues had made the Committee's task more difficult, the meeting represented an opportunity for the delegation to explain the situation in Sierra Leone. She asked whether the State party intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. The State party's legislative framework was fairly comprehensive, but more could be done to bring it into line with the Convention. In that connection, she would be grateful for more detailed information on any legislative reforms that had been proposed. She observed that some traditional practices hampered the implementation of legislation. Although the Convention was not directly applicable in the courts, she wished to know whether it had been invoked in recent case law.

11. It would also be helpful to know what measures had been taken to strengthen the financial and human resources of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and what efforts were being made to strengthen local governance and improve local planning and management. More information on the National Commission for Children would be welcome, in particular with regard to its resources and its cooperation with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. Was it responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention? If so, was it independent and fully compatible with the Paris Principles?

12. She acknowledged that many different sectoral programmes had been developed, but wished to know whether consideration had been given to the creation of a global strategy for the protection of the rights of the child, one accompanied by an action plan, indicators, follow-up procedures and adequate financial resources. She also wished to know what was being done to improve the allocation of financial resources and develop an allocation system based on human rights, given that the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and many civil society organizations involved in the protection of the rights of the child were highly dependent on international aid.

13. She asked what measures were being taken or had been planned to ensure that the Convention and its optional protocols were widely disseminated, in particular in terms of their inclusion in training programmes for professionals tasked with protecting the rights of the child and their translation into local languages. In the light of government efforts to promote entrepreneurial activity, she enquired whether the private sector would play a role in protecting the rights of the child and whether any safeguards had been introduced to that end. Although the Child Rights Act defined the child as a person aged under 18 years, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act allowed persons aged under 18 years to marry in certain circumstances. Were there any plans to reform the latter Act and the discriminatory provisions in the Constitution with a view to ending child marriage?

14. She would appreciate more information on the new birth registration system. Were large fees still charged for a late registration? More information on the promotion and protection of other civil rights and freedoms, including the right to freedom of expression, freedom of conscience and religion, the right of association and the right of access to appropriate information, would also be welcome.

15. **Ms. Winter** said that, despite some improvements, current legislation discriminated against women and girls. Discrimination was also a problem for persons living with HIV/AIDS, persons with disabilities and, to the north of the country in particular, persons with albinism. In that context, she would be grateful for more information, including some idea of time frames, on the efforts being made to counter discrimination. She drew attention to the Committee's general comment No. 14 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (CRC/C/GC/14), as it might prove useful when drafting guidelines on the best interests of the child. Had that general comment been translated into local languages?

16. She asked what measures had been planned to lower the rate of child mortality. As public health advice was often not followed, it would be helpful to know whether the Government would make efforts to raise awareness of, for example, the importance of using impregnated nets to prevent malaria. More information on any programmes introduced to fight drug addiction among children and young people would also be welcome. Adolescent pregnancies, which were associated with a high rate of child mortality, and unsafe abortions represented two further challenges. In that connection, the safe abortion bill, which had twice been blocked by the President, should be adopted in order to save lives.

17. The Committee was concerned by the high prevalence of rape and incest perpetrated against young girls by members of their family in Sierra Leone and by the general tendency to blame the victim and not the perpetrator of the crime. She enquired why so few cases were brought before the courts. The tradition of dealing with cases of rape and incest within the family or the wider community was not an acceptable alternative to the formal justice system, as family or community-based solutions were often brokered for the purpose of upholding the honour of the victim's family and afforded the victim herself little or no protection or support. She asked how many young girls had benefited from the special assistance programme in place for rape victims and how the State party planned to raise public awareness of the plight of those girls and to convince families to prioritize the welfare of their daughters.

18. Although children were given the opportunity to voice their opinions on certain governmental and legislative issues and on school matters, there were no general guidelines for applying the principle of respect for the views of the child enshrined in the Convention. Moreover, there was a certain reluctance to take children's views into consideration within the community and the judiciary. She asked what measures the State party envisaged taking to educate judges, prosecutors and police officers about the right of children to be heard and to express their views. She also asked whether children who were required to testify before the courts received special assistance and what measures were in place to safeguard their rights during court proceedings.

19. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** said that the delegation should clarify whether the Human Rights Commission or the National Commission for Children had a specific mandate and the human and financial resources necessary to provide specialized protection to children and adolescents and to investigate violations of children's rights.

20. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that the various laws adopted to date had done little to reduce the high prevalence of sexual and domestic violence in the country. She asked how the State party planned to encourage child victims to report incidents of sexual and

domestic violence and to raise awareness about the full range of support services available to them, including rehabilitation programmes, as well as about the availability of reparation for violations of their rights. She also asked whether police officers, health-care professionals and members of the judiciary were provided with training on how to deal effectively with cases of sexual and domestic violence. It would also be useful to know whether the State party intended to prohibit the use of corporal punishment and to promote the use of alternative disciplinary measures and good parenting practices.

21. While the Committee welcomed the efforts made by the State party to eradicate the practice of female genital mutilation, it remained concerned by the persistence of the practice throughout the national territory. The Committee would appreciate more information about the reasons behind the vehement opposition to expressly prohibiting female genital mutilation in the Child Rights Act. Was there a helpline in place to assist girls who had already undergone the procedure?

22. **Mr. Gurán** said that it would be useful to learn more about the procedure for appointing the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the National Commission for Children and how their independence was guaranteed. The delegation should clarify whether the Human Rights Commission or the National Commission for Children was competent to receive complaints from or on behalf of children whose rights had been violated, and indicate whether the State party had taken steps to raise the awareness of children about the existence of that complaints mechanism.

23. **Ms. Winter** said that the Committee had received alarming reports that, during the Ebola crisis, some 14,000 girls had fallen pregnant. She wondered how those girls had become pregnant and, if those pregnancies were the result of rape, whether the perpetrators had been prosecuted and punished. Were there plans to investigate the circumstances of those pregnancies and to bring those persons found to have committed rape to justice? The fact that girls who were visibly pregnant were often prevented from attending school made the situation all the more serious. It was likely that the girls in question were victims of sexual violence and therefore in need of special assistance. Had the State party devised a strategy to ensure that the girls received the necessary care and support?

The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

24. **Ms. Blyden** (Sierra Leone) said that, once the Government had dealt with the aftermath of the Ebola epidemic, it would give due consideration to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. At that moment in time, there was no reason why the Government would not ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention.

25. The constitutional reform process was still ongoing and it was hoped that many outstanding issues, such as the repeal or amendment of discriminatory constitutional provisions, would be settled by the upcoming constitutional referendum. The process of aligning the legal minimum age for marriage provided for in the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act with that provided for in the Child Rights Act would be relatively uncomplicated, requiring only a small amendment to be made to the former. Under normal circumstances, the necessary amendment could be introduced before the end of 2016. The Law Reform Commission was the body responsible for overseeing legislative reform and would oversee the alignment process. The relevant government ministries, departments and agencies were in the process of identifying discriminatory laws that were in need of amendment and submitting the corresponding request for amendment to the Commission for inclusion in its 2017 workplan.

26. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs recognized that the share of the national budget allocated to social issues, gender and children's affairs was insufficient and was lobbying the Budget Bureau and other relevant stakeholders in an

attempt to remedy that situation. In Sierra Leone, the Government worked in partnership with civil society organizations, traditional leaders and children to set the national budget. A child protection unit had been set up in all local councils in Sierra Leone as a means of strengthening their capacity to protect children and adolescents, and training on gender issues and the Child Rights Act was dispensed to local council members. Activities to raise public awareness of children's rights were conducted at both the local council and chiefdom levels. The National Child Justice Strategy served to bolster the efforts already undertaken to enhance the protection available to children and adolescents at the local level.

27. The National Commission for Children was fully compatible with the Paris Principles and operated in conditions of total independence, as demonstrated by the fact that it had openly criticized government policy on children in the media without consequence. Children could readily access the services provided by the Commission. Only the Human Rights Commission was competent to receive complaints from or on behalf of children whose rights had been violated. However, the Human Rights Commission worked closely with the National Commission for Children to investigate and respond to such complaints.

28. The Committee should refer to the statistical data table appearing in the first annex to the replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/SLE/Q/3-5/Add.1) for an overview of the budgetary resources allocated to the different government ministries and their various initiatives.

29. The Government acknowledged the need to translate the Convention and the Child Rights Act into all the languages spoken in Sierra Leone and, provided that sufficient funding was available, could begin to do so in the near future. In the interim, the Government had conducted training activities in local languages to raise the awareness of those texts among the different communities living in Sierra Leone.

30. Over the years, a number of private sector and corporate entities had invested in charitable activities intended to improve the situation of the country's children. The Government had launched a large-scale birth registration programme, which was still ongoing, with the aim of achieving universal birth registration in Sierra Leone. Although the late registration fee had been originally introduced to encourage parents to register their children immediately after birth, the Government recognized that it could also deter parents who had not had the opportunity to register their child from doing so. As part of its reform of the national birth registration system, the Government intended to waive the late registration fee.

31. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** asked whether there was a specialized unit dealing with children and adolescents operating within the Human Rights Commission and, if so, whether the State party had taken steps to raise public awareness of its existence and of the services that it provided.

32. **Ms. Aho Assouma** asked how long it took to issue a birth certificate after a birth had been registered, whether uncollected birth certificates were systematically forwarded to the parents of the child in question and how much parents were required to pay to receive a birth certificate.

33. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that the delegation should explain how the Human Rights Commission cooperated with the National Commission for Children in investigating and responding to complaints of violations of children's rights. She asked how many complaints had been submitted by or on behalf of children to the Human Rights Commission and whether children could file a complaint with the Commission in person.

34. **Ms. Blyden** (Sierra Leone) said that there was indeed a specialized unit dealing with children and adolescents operating within the Human Rights Commission. The delegation

was unable to provide statistical information on the number of complaints that had been submitted by or on behalf of children to the Commission at that time but could submit it in due course.

35. **Ms. Kamara** (Sierra Leone) said that the Government recognized the right of every child living in Sierra Leone to have their birth registered free of charge, irrespective of where they were born. In the interests of efficiency, responsibilities relating to birth registration had been devolved to the health units operating within the different chiefdoms of the country. Each health unit was responsible for registering births and issuing birth certificates to parents living within a given catchment area and was required to do so free of charge, regardless of when the child in question had actually been born. Under normal circumstances, a birth certificate was issued immediately after a birth had been registered. Local councils exercised oversight over the activities of the health units operating within the different chiefdoms and took any necessary decisions.

36. Referring to the high maternal, child and infant mortality rates, she said that prior to the Ebola outbreak, the Government had made great progress in terms of immunizations, institutional deliveries, as well as prenatal and postnatal visits, thanks to its Free Health-Care Initiative. However, those gains had been offset by the Ebola epidemic, as women had suddenly stopped coming to medical facilities for fear of contracting the virus. Moreover, health services in Sierra Leone now suffered from a lack of human resources, as 221 members of staff had been lost during the outbreak.

37. Tackling the high mortality rate was a top priority of the post-Ebola recovery strategy. The Government had removed 756 unverified staff members from its payroll, making funds available to hire additional staff, and was expanding training for midwives. The Government was trying to improve the supply chain to make drugs more accessible and was working with the United Nations Children's Fund and other partners in order to provide free health care. It had also reviewed its essential medicines list and was using community health workers to assist children with acute respiratory infections, as well as pregnant women.

38. The Government was making an effort to step up its data collection in order to have a more accurate assessment of mortalities and thus improve its health-care management. It was also distributing mosquito nets and improving sanitation and access to water in hundreds of communities.

39. **Ms. Winter** asked which staff members had been removed from the Government's payroll and why.

40. **Ms. Kamara** (Sierra Leone) said that ghost employees, or unverified staff members who could not be traced, had been removed from the payroll, allowing the Government to save US$ 180,000 per month.

41. **Ms. Blyden** (Sierra Leone), referring to concerns raised about the safe abortion bill said that Sierra Leone was a democratic country where citizens enjoyed freedom of speech and that that had an impact on the status of the bill. Essentially there were two issues concerning the bill but sometimes they became blurred. First, the bill had been poorly drafted and therefore had to be edited before it could be signed by the President. Secondly, there were certain groups lobbying against the adoption of the bill which considered that abortion should not be condoned, and their views could be misinterpreted as reflecting the position of the Government. The views of all sides had to be duly taken into account and the sooner the issue was resolved the better.

42. The delegation was unaware of any discrimination against albino children in the north of the country, but was willing to investigate the matter if the Committee could provide it with more specific information. It did, however, acknowledge that children with

HIV/AIDS were often victims of discrimination and abandoned by their families. The HIV/AIDS Secretariat provided counselling and support to families whenever possible, and abandoned children were placed in alternative care. Sierra Leone provided special schools for deaf and blind children and had programmes for various types of disabilities.

43. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she would appreciate further information on the application of the Sexual Offences Act, 2012, which provided for access to free health care for victims of sexual violence. The Committee had received information that such care was limited, if not non-existent.

44. **Ms. Blyden** (Sierra Leone) said that sexual offences were prosecuted and that over 350 cases of sexual violence had gone to court during the last quarter of 2015. Since the promulgation of the Sexual Offences Act, the State party offered specialized court hearings for child victims and their families. Victims were allowed to testify in camera and were afforded special protection.

45. Sierra Leone had launched several campaigns involving senior officials and well-known public figures to raise awareness about sexual and gender-based violence. Women and children were increasingly aware of their rights and had access to support services.

46. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that the issue of sexual and gender-based violence against children was of great concern to the Government, which had taken steps to ensure that perpetrators were caught and brought to justice and that victims received prompt and comprehensive support. The National Referral Protocol on Gender-Based Violence had been rolled out successfully across the country, and child welfare committees had been established throughout the chiefdoms and villages in order to identify issues of sexual and gender-based violence and to provide protection for children. The committees had received training on the National Referral Protocol and were the first point of contact for child victims. Victims who came forward were immediately sent to hospital for a medical examination. Once a medical report had been issued, the child victims were referred to the police, so that the case could be investigated and the perpetrators could be prosecuted and punished accordingly. During the trials, the children would be provided with protection and counselling and would also be able to continue their studies.

47. **Ms. Blyden** (Sierra Leone) said that significant progress had been made in combating sexual and gender-based violence and providing police protection for child victims. The Government was very active in terms of advocacy and training relating to children's issues and welcomed the participation of civil society organizations. Efforts were being made to remove the stigma attached to victims of sexual abuse and to ensure that family members did not place the honour of their family above the welfare of their children.

48. **Ms. Winter** said that she had read the State party's report thoroughly but had not found all the statistical data she had been looking for. It would be useful if, at the next meeting, the delegation could provide information on the sentences handed down in the 350 court cases previously referred to and on the number of child victims who had received assistance.

49. She wished to know how many cases of violence, and particularly sexual violence, inflicted on children by teachers had been brought to court and what the outcome of those cases had been. Under national law, corporal punishment was allowed in cases where it was deemed reasonable and justifiable. She wished to know how and by whom that was determined.

50. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether the protocol on assistance for child victims of sexual violence had been standardized and implemented nationwide. She also asked how many psychologists there were in the country who could dispense the assistance provided for under the protocol.

51. **Ms. Blyden** (Sierra Leone) said that sexual consent with a person who had not reached the age of majority was defined in national law as statutory rape. Society, however, was only beginning to understand that concept, as child marriage was deeply entrenched in the culture in some parts of the country. Her Government was making great efforts to change those cultural values through a nationwide campaign to end child marriage. There were only 10 psychologists in the whole country, and that posed a great challenge with regard to mental health.

52. The *Soweis* — female leaders of the Bondo secret societies who practised female genital mutilation — had agreed to work with the Government to ensure that girls were not forcibly initiated into the secret societies. That agreement constituted a great step forward and was unprecedented in Africa. By focusing on the right of children to be free from torture or cruel treatment, the rights of the child could be dealt with separately from the very contentious issue of female genital mutilation as a whole, which was a practice of which many women were proud.

53. If her Government were to tell local communities that they must stop the practice altogether, those communities would believe that the Government was being paid by "the white man" to destroy their culture. They would no longer trust or respect the Government and would stop listening to its advice about preventing malaria, HIV/AIDS, malnutrition or other important health concerns. Eighty per cent of women in Sierra Leone belonged to an ethnic group that had practised female genital mutilation for centuries, and many of them took pride in upholding that practice.

54. For that reason, her Government believed that the most effective course of action was to prohibit female genital mutilation for girls under 18 years of age. While some other African countries had passed laws prohibiting the practice altogether, they were not able to implement those laws. The Secretary-General of the National Sowei Council was currently studying the situation to determine what charges could be brought against persons who subjected girls to female genital mutilation.

55. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked what measures the Government had taken or planned to take to establish a family protection programme that offered real financial support to poor families, so that their children would not end up on the streets. Information on measures to improve access to education in rural areas would also be useful. While she welcomed the introduction of quality standards for institutions providing residential care to children, she remained concerned about reports that some institutions did not meet those standards and yet continued to operate. She therefore wished to know what measures were being taken to implement the quality standards for institutional care for children and to promote deinstitutionalization.

56. **Ms. Winter** noted that there were no children living with their incarcerated mothers in the country, which was apparently due to a lack of adequate facilities. Given that the former Special Court for Sierra Leone had left a detention centre intended for women prisoners and their children, she asked why that facility was not being used for that purpose.

57. She asked what the State party was doing to combat corruption and sexual abuse by teachers in schools, who reportedly asked for sexual favours from girls who were unable to pay for their tuition. Following the Ebola crisis, the economic exploitation of child labour had become rampant once again in the country. She therefore asked how the Government planned to ensure the return to school of children, and especially young children between 6 and 12 years of age, given that many parents were unwilling for their children to stop working.

58. **Ms. Sandberg** asked how many children were currently in residential care. She also asked whether there was a formal system of foster care and, if so, how many children were being cared for through that system. She wished to know what criteria were used to

determine whether or not children should be placed in residential care. Given the low number of persons employed to monitor residential care institutions, she wondered whether there were any plans to scale up that monitoring. She also wondered what action was taken in cases where it was revealed that residential care institutions did not meet the established standards.

59. She enquired how many children were currently in informal care (*men pikin*), and she wished to hear about the challenges the State party faced in its implementation of the National Alternative Care Policy for Children. Lastly, she asked whether the Trust Fund for Child Welfare was still operational and, if so, what resources had been allocated to it.

60. **Mr. Cardona Llorens**, noting that the State party's report did not contain any statistical data on children with disabilities, asked whether such data was available. He asked what budget was allocated specifically for children with disabilities, as the information contained in the report was not disaggregated by age group. He asked what steps the Government was taking to move towards a system of inclusive education. Public awareness-raising campaigns were essential in the effort to end stigma against children with disabilities.

61. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** asked what measures were being taken to promote breastfeeding and to support mothers who wished to breastfeed. While welcoming the training provided to nurses on evaluating mental health, he questioned whether 21 nurses would be sufficient to cover the whole population, and asked whether doctors also received such training. He wondered whether the Government might also consider offering training on the dangers of the excessive use of medication and institutionalization when treating mental health issues.

62. **Ms. Aho Assouma** asked how the Government ensured that the recipients of insecticide-treated mosquito nets actually used those nets. She wished to know what percentage of children was fully vaccinated by their first birthday and what measures were being taken to ensure vaccination coverage throughout the country.

63. She doubted whether teenagers would be willing to go to a hospital to get access to condoms. She therefore asked whether condoms were available in schools, along with counselling and information about sexual and reproductive health. She enquired whether there were any psychologists specialized in child psychology and whether children placed in psychiatric institutions were kept separate from adult patients. She wished to know about the prevalence of HIV in the country and the availability of treatment. Information would also be welcome on the treatment available to children who abused alcohol or other drugs. Lastly, she asked whether the Government ensured free access to health care for girls, including victims of incest and rape, who suffered from complications resulting from unsafe abortions.

64. **Mr. Gastaud** asked what progress had been made in the effort to address the widespread phenomenon of children living on the streets. He also asked whether any studies had been conducted to determine the number of street children in various cities throughout the country and the root causes of the phenomenon. He requested further information about the shelters and educational opportunities made available to street children.

65. **Mr. Kotrane** asked whether a family court had been established. Since the mandate of such a court should be to deal with civil matters only, he asked whether the Government also planned to introduce a juvenile criminal court and to provide specialized services for children in conflict with the law during all stages of the proceedings.

66. He shared the concerns expressed in the State party's report with respect to juvenile justice, and he requested further information about the extent to which the minimum age of criminal responsibility was respected throughout the country.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.